

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

**This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:**

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

1. (currently amended): An image processing method comprising the steps of:  
  
preliminarily setting a plurality of basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics for a gradation conversion of image data, each characteristic representing an input/output relationship of luminance data created from the image data and low-pass filtered~~the image data for a gradation conversion~~;

selecting one or more basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics from said plurality of basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics; and

compressing or expanding gradation of said image data using the thus selected one or more basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics.

2. (previously presented): The image processing method according to claim 1, wherein said plurality of basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics are preliminarily set in accordance with at least one of an original type, an original size and an analysis result of said image data.

3. (previously presented): The image processing method according to claim 1, wherein said one or more basic compression characteristics or a plurality of basic expansion

characteristics are selected in accordance with at least one of an original type, an original size and an analysis result of said image data.

4. (currently amended): The image processing method according to claim 23, wherein said plurality of basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics are preliminarily set in accordance with at least one of an original type and an original size, and said original type is at least one of a negative film, a reversal film and a black-and-white film, and wherein said original size is at least one of a 135 size, a 240 size and a 120/220 size.

5. (original): The image processing method according to claim 1, wherein said one or more basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics are selected by a manual operation.

6. (original): The image processing method according to claim 1, wherein said basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics are provided as a parameter or a look-up table.

7. (previously presented): The image processing method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of analyzing said image information, wherein the step of compressing or expanding gradation of said image information using said selected one or more basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics comprises the steps of:

setting a processing condition for compressing or expanding the gradation of said image information using said selected one or more basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics in accordance with said analysis result; and

processing said image data in accordance with the thus set processing condition.

8. (previously presented): The image processing method according to claim 1, wherein the step of compressing or expanding the gradation of said image data using said selected one or more basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics comprises the steps of:

setting a processing condition for compressing or expanding the gradation of said image data using said selected one or more basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics by a manual operation; and

processing said image data in accordance with the thus set processing condition.

9. (original): The image processing method according to claim 7, wherein said processing condition is set as a look-up table.

10. (currently amended): An image processing method comprising the steps of:

preliminarily setting a plurality of basic compression characteristics or ~~a plurality of basic expansion characteristics~~ for a gradation conversion of image data, each characteristic representing an input/output relationship of luminance data created from the image data and low-pass filtered;

selecting one or more basic compression characteristics or one or more basic expansion characteristics from said plurality of basic compression characteristics or said plurality of basic expansion characteristics;

analyzing image data;

setting a processing condition for compressing or expanding gradation of said image data using the thus selected one or more basic compression characteristics or the thus selected one or more basic expansion characteristics in accordance with an analysis result obtained by thus analyzing the image data; and

processing said image data in accordance with the thus set processing condition.

11. (currently amended): An image processing method comprising the steps of:

preliminarily setting a plurality of basic compression characteristics or ~~a plurality of basic expansion characteristics~~ for a gradation conversion of image data, each characteristic representing an input/output relationship of luminance data created from the image data and low-pass filtered;

selecting one or more basic compression characteristics or one or more basic expansion characteristics from said plurality of basic compression characteristics or said plurality of basic expansion characteristics;

setting a processing condition for compressing or expanding gradation of image data using the thus selected one or more basic compression characteristics or the thus selected one or more basic expansion characteristics by a manual operation; and

processing said image ~~information~~ data in accordance with the thus set processing condition.

12. (currently amended): An image processing apparatus comprising:

a selecting device for selecting one or more basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics from preliminarily set plurality of basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics for use in compressing or expanding gradation of image data supplied by an image information supply source; each characteristic representing an input/output relationship of luminance data created from the image data and low-pass filtered; and

an image processing device for compressing or expanding the gradation of said image data using said one or more basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics selected by said selecting device.

13. (previously presented): The image processing apparatus according to claim 12, further comprising:

a setting section for analyzing the image data and setting a processing condition for compressing or expanding the gradation of said image data using said one or more basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics selected by said selecting device in accordance with an analyzing result obtained by thus analyzing the image data,

wherein said image processing device processes said image data in accordance with the processing condition set by said setting section.

14. (previously presented): The image processing apparatus according to claim 12, further comprising:

a setting section for setting a processing condition for compressing or expanding the gradation of said image data by a manual operation using said one or more basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics selected by said selecting device,

wherein said image processing device processes said image data in accordance with the processing condition set by said setting section.

15. (currently amended): The image processing apparatus according to claim 12,

wherein said selecting device selects said one or more basic compression characteristic or basic expansion characteristics in accordance with at least one of an original type of an image as an image data source, and an original size of the image as the image data source ~~and an analysis result of said image data.~~

16. (previously presented): The method of claim 1, wherein selecting one or more basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics comprises selecting at least two of: the basic compression characteristics and basic expansion characteristics as selected characteristic sets and cascading the selected characteristic sets.

17. (previously presented): The method of claim 1, wherein the preliminary setting of basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics are preset in memory.

18. (previously presented): The apparatus of claim 12, wherein in the selecting device, selecting one or more basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics comprises selecting at least two of the basic compression characteristics and basic expansion characteristics as selected characteristic sets and cascading the selected characteristic sets.

19. (previously presented): The apparatus of claim 12 further comprising a memory, wherein the preliminary setting of basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics are preset in the memory.

20. (currently amended): The image processing method according to claim 1, wherein the input/output relationship of the luminance~~image~~ data is defined on at least one side of an upper level side and a lower level side of a predetermined level for an input value of the ~~image~~ luminance data, and two basic compression or expansion characteristics are selected, one of the two characteristics representing a relationship defined on either side of the upper level side or the lower level side, and another of the two characteristics representing a relationship defined on another side.

21. (currently amended): The image processing method according to claim 20, wherein the two selected basic compression or expansion characteristics are cascaded to define the input/output relationship on both the upper level side and the lower level side of the predetermined level for the input value of the ~~image~~ luminance data.

22. (new): The image processing method according to claim 1, wherein said plurality of basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics are preliminarily set in accordance with an original size.

23 (new). The image processing method according to claim 1, wherein said plurality of basic compression characteristics or basic expansion characteristics are processed across an entire density range of the image data.